

Text: 1 Pt 3.1-2

Welcome to the much-anticipated message, “*Likewise, You Wives*,” in which the pastor tries valiantly to stay out of trouble!

In our times, the traditional understanding of the Bible in this area is under attack, even from some who claim they are Christians.

It is true that some have abused Biblical teaching to further selfish ends. We deplore and condemn that kind of misuse of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, we don’t want to recoil into an unbiblical use of the Scriptures in the opposite direction.

What we want is the “Goldilocks zone” of Bible interpretation: “Just right.”

That is what we will try for this evening.

Edmond Hiebert, in his scholarly way, touches on why this passage (and others like it) sparks such intense interest:

“The theme of Christian submission is now applied to the marriage relationship, **the most intimate and restricted human relationship. It involves one of the most fundamental aspects of the Christian life.** In addressing wives and husbands, Peter did not stress the rights of each partner, but the duties that are to be discharged in their relations to each other.”¹

Note the parts of the quotation I put in bold.

Read 1 Pt 3.1-7, text 1-2

Proposition: As in other applications of submission, God’s goal for wives is a reformation of spirit and an imitation of Christ.

I. Toward defining submission

A. “In the same way”

1. The opening word connects this with what goes before

a. “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution” (example, kings and governors) (2.13)

b. “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect” (2.18)

¹ D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 Peter* (Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1997), 194.

2. Raises questions
 - a. You mean... marriage is slavery?
 - b. You mean... disobedience is a crime?
3. The focus of the passage is on behaviour positively, imitating the pattern Christ set (2.21)

B. A continuation of the theme: “be submissive”

1. Again, a participle
2. Imperative force comes from 2.13
3. A continuation of a theme

C. Consistent with overall biblical revelation

1. We find the roots of biblical teaching on marriage in Genesis 2-3
2. Paul grounds biblical teaching in the creation order (1 Cor 11.3, 8-9)
3. Paul also grounds the relation between men and women on the fall (1 Tim 2.9-15)
4. Peter’s teaching is consistent with Paul’s teaching (Eph 5.22, Col 3.18, Tit 2.4-5 and passages already cited)

D. The meaning of submission

1. Danker: “‘cause to be in compliance with requirements for order’, **to subject, to subordinate, bring into compliance**, of various relationships”²
2. Friberg: “(1) active *subject, bring under firm control, subordinate* (RO 8.20b); (2) passive with a middle sense; (a) with a component of compulsion *have to submit* (LU 10.17, 20); (b) with a component of voluntary submission *be submissive, obey, subject oneself* (LU 2.51; EP 5.21)”³

It is the last definition of Friberg we are after here.

² F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), BibleWorks. v.8.

³ Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.8.

E. A small qualification: “one’s own husband”

1. The passage doesn’t teach the subordination of all women to all men
2. Nor does it teach the subordination of any woman to any man
3. The passage points specifically to the marriage relationship and nowhere else

In other words, the question isn’t one of value or equality, but of relationship. How do we relate to one another in marriage.

II. Explaining the mundane by the extreme

A. The reason the focus shifts to husbands who are “disobedient to the word”

1. A practical reason

- a. In the 1st century, many women were attracted to Christianity because it did teach the equality of persons: this was liberating
- b. Consequently, many women had husbands who refused to take on the new religion
- c. How should they live as Christians in their homes, especially when their husbands had no spiritual insight?

2. An educational reason

- a. The passage teaches about submission in marriage in general
- b. The “even if any” clause illustrates the principle for all marriages by discussing the most difficult marriages

B. The disobedient husband = unbelieving husband

1. The idea is not just a Christian man who might be disobeying at some point (or even consistently)
2. The idea is one who is disobedient to the word:
 - a. The word = the gospel
 - b. The gospel calls all men to repent
 - c. The man refuses to repent (and persists in the refusal)

“The negative verb, ‘do not believe’ (*apeithousin*), literally, ‘to be unpersuaded,’ portrays those who deliberately and persistently set themselves against the claims of the gospel.”⁴

C. The hope is conversion “without a word”

1. This isn’t a prohibition of ever speaking about the gospel in the unsaved husband’s presence
2. Rather, it is wisdom about not *always speaking the gospel in the husband’s presence*:

you can’t nag a man to heaven

3. Instead, win your man by your behaviour
 - a. Remember the pattern of Christ: all about behaviour even in negative circumstances
 - b. A godly testimony is more appealing than an overbearing tongue
 - 1) Men are made to lead
 - 2) The male ego resists female leadership (stubbornly foolish)

This is no guarantee, but a godly strategy for living

D. Finally, remember the unbelieving husband is the extreme example for educational purposes

1. If a man is a Christian, and the wife disagrees with his leadership, what then?
2. It is not that she *may not speak* about her disagreement
3. But it is that her quiet submissive spirit is an effective influence (and remember, Peter will say something to the husbands as well in a few verses)

III. Understanding submission in terms of worship

A. In v. 2, the emphasis is on the husband watching the behaviour of the wife

“as they observe”

⁴ Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 196.

B. What is the chaste and respectful behaviour?

1. The word “chaste” refers to purity of life
 - a. Not just moral purity
 - b. But “the beauty of her piety”⁵
 - c. “Innocence refined by testing”⁶
2. The word “respectful” is the familiar word, “fear”
 - a. The way our translators give it, they imply this respect is towards the husband
 - b. Note the literal TRANS: “while [the husband’s] observe the in fear chaste behaviour of you.”
 - c. Also note that in Peter, the term fear is always pointing to God

C. The call to submission is a call to a lifestyle of worship

1. We fear God, we serve him in our various relationships
2. Especially in the home, the women can worship God by the purity of their worship
3. The purity of worship exerts a powerful influence on the direction of the home

Conclusion:

Proposition: As in other applications of submission, God’s goal for wives is a reformation of spirit and an imitation of Christ.

All women can take some instruction from this, and all Christian men as well. We aren’t looking at our human relationships in this way, but we are all called to live a life of worship before the Lord.

⁵ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament: James to Jude*, ed. Robert Frew (London: Blackie & Son, 1884), 157.

⁶ Cited in Hiebert, *1 Peter*, 198.